

Message Text

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TAGS: SHUM, HA
SUBJECT: FURTHER GOVERNMENT MOVES TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS
CONDITIONS IN HAITI

SUMMARY: A HIGH LEVEL INVESTIGATION INTO CHARGES OF MILITIA
INDISCIPLINE AND PEASANT LAND DISPOSSESSION IN SOUTHWEST
HAITI, A CRACKDOWN ON OFFICIALS IN JACMEL PROFITEERING FROM
ANNUAL RECRUITMENT OF SUGAR CANE CUTTERS FOR DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC, AND PREPARATION FOR ANNUAL PRISONER AMNESTY
REFLECT A RENEWED EFFORT TO IMPROVE HAITI'S RECORD IN
HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. END SUMMARY.

1. JUSTICE MINISTER INSPECTS LES CAYES AREA. MAJOR
PORT AU PRINCE PAPERS DECEMBER 18-19 REPORT THAT JUSTICE
MINISTER JEANTY INSPECTED LES CAYES AREA OF SOUTHWEST HAITI,
ACCOMPANIED BY SUPERVISOR GENERAL OF MILITIA, MAJOR
ROSALIE ADOLPHE. PRESS CITES PRESIDENT DUVALIER'S DESIRE
TO REMEDY CERTAIN "ANOMALIES" IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF
IMPARTIAL JUSTICE AND ALLUDES TO "QUESTIONABLE" RELATIONS
BETWEEN SOME JUDGES AND CITIZENS BELONGING TO MILITIA UNITS.
JEANTY AND ADOLPHE CONVOKED LOCAL OFFICIALS AND REMINDED
THEM THAT THE MILITIA SHOULD BE A DISCIPLINED FORCE
SERVING THE LAW AND THAT MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES HAD
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OBLIGATION TO OVERSEE MILITIA PERFORMANCE. JEANTY ALSO
HEARD COMPLAINTS FROM OVER ONE HUNDRED SMALL FARMERS FROM
POINTE-A-SABLE DISTRICT WHO CLAIMED THEY HAD BEEN
DISPOSSESSED OF THEIR LAND WITHOUT INDEMNIFICATION BY A
FORMER POLITICAL "POTENTATE" WHO HAD TERRORIZED THE
SOUTH FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. JEANTY PROMISED THAT THE

PRESIDENTIAL AGRARIAN COMMISSION WOULD INVESTIGATE THESE CHARGES.

2. CRACKDOWN ON JACMEL RECRUITMENT RACKET. FOR YEARS, JACMEL OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN TAKING BRIBES FROM PEASANTS WHO APPLY FOR CONTRACTS AS SUGAR CANE CUTTERS IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC DURING THE FIVE TO SIX MONTH SEASON. SINCE PEASANTS CAN EARN BETWEEN FIVE AND SIX HUNDRED DOLLARS ON THIS STINT--A PRINCELY SUM IN HAITI--AND SINCE POOL OF UNDEREMPLOYED LABOR FAR EXCEEDS 6-12,000 PLACES NORMALLY AVAILABLE, THE OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR SCREENING HAVE CLASSIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTORTION, AND THEY HAVE MADE THE MOST OF THEM. THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, THESE OFFICIALS RECEIVED A RUDE SHOCK, ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES IN JACMEL. WITHIN PAST FORTNIGHT, LT. COLONEL VALME, SENIOR SECURITY OFFICER FOR PRESIDENT DUVALIER, TWICE VISITED JACMEL, CONDUCTED EXHAUSTIVE INTERROGATIONS, AND ARRESTED AT LEAST EIGHT LEADING CITIZENS, INCLUDING THE CHIEF OF JACMEL SOCIAL AFFAIRS BUREAU. THE MILITIA CHIEF OF JACMEL, LAROCHE, REPORTEDLY HAS FLED TO ESCAPE ARREST AND IS NOW HIDING NEAR PORT AU PRINCE. LAROCHE IS A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF HENRI JEAN-BAPTISTE, LONGTIME DUVALIER STALWART AND DE FACTO POLITICAL BOSS OF JACMEL. NOTHING HAS THUS FAR APPEARED IN THE PRESS ABOUT THIS CRACKDOWN, JACMEL DUVALIERISTS ARE INCENSED AT DUVALIER FOR "CUTTING OFF HIS POWER BASE", AND CASE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SERVE TO ACCENTUATE DIVISIONS BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND MADAME DUVALIER.

3. AMNESTY PROSPECTS. PREPARATIONS ARE APPARENTLY BEING CONFIDENTIAL

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MADE FOR ANNUAL PRISONER AMNESTY, USUALLY ANNOUNCED JUST BEFORE JANUARY 1 NATIONAL DAY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT JUSTICE MINISTER JEANTY HAS CONFERRED LT COL VALME ON THIS ISSUE. IN WAKE OF INCREASED GOH ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS' PROBLEMS, SOME FAIRLY SIGNIFICANT ACTION IS EXPECTED THIS YEAR-- IF ONLY, SOME SPECULATE, TO TAKE INITIATIVE BEFORE CARTER ADMINISTRATION FORCES GOVERNMENT'S HAND. ANOTHER CONSIDERATION IS THAT INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS WILL SEND TWO DELEGATES ON FOLLOW-UP VISIT IN JANUARY TO INSPECT PRISON CONDITIONS, REPORTEDLY IMPROVED SINCE IRC VISIT IN SEPTEMBER WHICH PROMPTED PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO RELEASE 261 PRISONERS WHO HAD BEEN DETAINED WITHOUT HEARING FOR MANY YEARS. AT THE SAME TIME, OBSERVERS NOTE PRESIDENT DUVALIER'S CONCERN LEST PREMATURE RELEASE OF THOSE ARRESTED FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES BE INTERPRETED BY COMMUNIST AND HAITIAN EXILE OPPONENTS AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. HOW THIS DILEMMA IS RESOLVED

WILL BE IMPORTANT EVIDENCE IN ASSESSING GOVERNMENT'S
RESPONSIVENESS TO DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES
TO IMPROVE RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS.
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